Differences in WTO meeting at Cancun

507. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether at the WTO Ministerial level Conference held in September last at Cancun, a joint declaration at the end could not be issued due to major differences between the developed and developing countries;

(b) the areas of differences between the two sides and how this stalemate is likely to affect interest of the developing countries which form a big majority of the human race; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by the Governemnt in cooperation with other developing countries to resolve the crisis especially if there are backdoor economic restrictions and pressures on them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) In view of the serious differences among Members, the Cancun Ministrial Conference of WTO ended without taking necessary decisions. However, a Ministrial statement was adopted at the end of the Conference which asked the Chairman of the General Council of WTO to convene a meeting of the General Council at Senior Official level no later than 15th December, 2003 to take action necessary at that stage to enable Members to move towards a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations.

(b) There were differences on all the major issues under consideration of the Conference viz. Agriculture, Singapore issues and Development related issues. On agriculture, while developed countries were interested in substantial market access in developing countries, they were not willing to agree to significant reduction in domestic support or in eliminating export subsidies. On Singapore issues the concerns of developing countries related to availability of development policy space and the absence of clarity on the implications of multilateral rules in the four relevant areas. Lack of adequate progress on development related issues was a major concern for many developing countries. At stake for developing countries is the food security and livelihood concerns of millions of their population dependent on agriculture.

(c) India has always supported the smooth functioning of a rule based and fair multilateral trading system. At the same time, we have

also been emphasizing that if further progress is to be expected, all WTO Members should show genuine commitment to re-start of the multilateral process. The concerns of the large number of developing countries and least developed countries will have to be taken into account and the 'development' dimension envisaged in the Doha mandate will have to be retained in letter and spirit. This could be achieved through a process of decision-making that is both transparent and inclusive, without ignoring the sensitivities of developing countries. India is participating in all the informal consultations in this regard and is also interacting with other Members with a view to facilitating the process. India is also closely coordinating with various developing country groupings, especially the G-20 on Agriculture and G-16 on Singapore Issues.

Indo-Asean Summit

508. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the countries with which India was able to negotiate and enter into trade agreements during Indo-ASEAN Summit held in Bali in October last alongwith the details in each case;

(b) whether India has been able to create a Free Trade Area as a result of the negotiations during the Summit; and

(c) if so, the main features thereof and the gains expected to the concerned countries on reciprocal basis?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) A Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between India and ASEAN was signed during the Second ASEAN-India Summit on 8th October, 2003 in Bali Indonesia. All the ten members of ASEAN i.e. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam signed the Agreement.

(b) The Framework Agreement prescribes that FTA in Goods between India and ASEAN is to be formed by the year 2016.

(c) The main features of the Framework Agreement cover FTA in Goods, Services and Investments and Areas of Economic Cooperation. The Framework Agreement also provides for an Early Harvest Programme